

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Please **amend** the claims as shown in the complete listing of claims shown below, pursuant to 37 CFR §1.121(c):

Claims 1-7. (*Canceled*)

Claim 8. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system comprising:

a cross-country ski comprising an upper surface including a central zone constructed and arranged to receive a device structured and arranged to be connected to a part of a boot in an area corresponding to a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of a wearer's foot for binding the boot to the ski;

the central zone of the ski comprising a binding zone having a location for receiving the binding device;

the upper surface of the ski comprising an upper support surface arranged on at least one of two lateral sides of the location to receive the binding device, the upper support surface being exposed laterally of the binding zone for coming in direct contact with the boot when a skier using the cross-country ski system exerts a pressure force with the boot toward the ski;

the location for receiving the binding device comprising an upwardly facing binding-receiving open recess of the upper surface of the ski;

the upwardly facing open recess of the upper surface of the ski extends extending downwardly at least partially to a depth below said upper support surface.

Claim 9. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

in the central zone of the ski, at least one lateral shoulder is arranged on one of the two lateral sides of the location for receiving the binding device such that the boot can be supported directly on the shoulder.

Claim 10. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

the ski comprises two lateral upper surfaces arranged on respective lateral sides of the location for receiving the binding device.

Claim 11. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 9, wherein:

the shoulder comprises a support surface for the boot arranged above the upper surface of the location for receiving the binding device.

Claim 12. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

the upper support surface of the ski is longitudinally arranged in the area corresponding to a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the wearer's foot.

Claim 13. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system comprising:

a cross-country ski comprising a central zone adapted to receive a device for binding a boot to the ski;

the central zone of the ski comprising an upper surface including a binding zone having a location for receiving the binding device;

the upper surface of the ski comprising an upper support surface arranged on at least one of two lateral sides of the location to receive the binding device, the upper support surface being exposed laterally of the binding zone for coming in direct contact with the boot when a skier using the cross-country ski system exerts a pressure force;

the location for receiving the binding device comprising an upwardly facing open recess of the upper surface of the ski;

a binding device constructed and arranged to be fixed on the ski in the upwardly facing open recess of the location for receiving the binding device, the binding device including a mechanism for binding engagement with the boot;

the upwardly facing open recess of the upper surface of the ski ~~extends~~ extending downwardly at least partially to a depth below said upper support surface.

Claim 14. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding device has, at least in the area of the support surface, a lesser width than a width of the ski.

Claim 15. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding device is adapted to be fitted within the recess of the upper surface of the ski;

the binding device has ~~[[a]]~~ an upwardly projecting rib adapted to be positioned within a downwardly facing longitudinal recess in a sole of the boot;

the cross-country ski system includes no baseplate to be mounted upon the ski between the boot and the upper support surface of the ski, so that the upper support surface of the ski is structured and arranged to contact the boot directly when the boot is engaged with the mechanism of the binding device.

Claim 16. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

at least in part of the central zone, a transverse width of the upper support surface is greater than a width of a lower gliding surface.

Claim 17. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the mechanism for engagement with the boot includes a front jaw adapted to engage a front bar of the boot for enabling articulation of the boot with respect to the ski;

the binding device includes an elastic return mechanism, said elastic return mechanism being rearwardly spaced from the front jaw and being adapted to engage a rear bar of the boot for applying an elastic return force to the rear bar.

Claim 18. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding device is adapted to be affixed to the ski by being positioned within the recess of the upper surface of the ski;

the binding device has [[a]] an upwardly projecting rib adapted to be positioned within a downwardly facing longitudinal recess in a sole of the boot;

the cross-country ski system includes no baseplate that would prevent a lower external surface of the boot from direct supporting engagement on the upper support surface of the ski.

Claim 19. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 15, further comprising:

a boot having a support surface adapted to be supported directly by said upper support surface of the ski.

Claim 20. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 19, wherein:

said support surface of the boot is in a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the boot.

Claim 21. (Currently Amended) A cross-country ski system comprising:

a cross-country ski and a binding device having a mechanism to engage a boot to bind the boot to the ski;

the cross-country ski having a longitudinally extending binding zone spaced from front and rear ends of the ski, said binding zone comprising:

a pair of transversely spaced apart longitudinally extending upper support surfaces structured and arranged to support directly support surfaces of a sole of a boot at least in a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the boot when the boot is engaged with a mechanism of the binding device for engagement with the boot;

an upwardly open longitudinally extending binding-receiving recess positioned between said pair of upper support surfaces;

at least in the binding zone, the ski has an upper surface width greater than a width of the binding device, thereby exposing the upper support surfaces for direct contact with the sole of the boot on opposite lateral sides of the binding device;

the binding device being structured and arranged to be fixed upon the ski in the upwardly open recess of the binding zone, the binding device having an upwardly projecting rib adapted to be positioned within a downwardly facing longitudinally groove in the sole of the boot;

the upwardly facing open recess of the upper surface of the ski extends extending downwardly at least partially to a depth below said upper support surface.

Claim 22. *(Previously Presented)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the cross-country ski system includes no baseplate that would prevent a lower external surface of the boot from direct supporting engagement on the upper support surfaces of the ski.

Claim 23. *(Previously Presented)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the binding device includes a front jaw adapted to engage a front bar of the boot for enabling articulation of the boot with respect to the ski;

the binding device includes an elastic return mechanism, said elastic return mechanism being rearwardly spaced from the front jaw and being adapted to engage a rear bar of the boot for applying an elastic return force to the rear bar.

Claim 24. *(Previously Presented)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 23, further comprising:

a boot having support surfaces adapted to be supported directly by said upper support surfaces of the ski, said boot having said front and rear bars.

Claim 25. *(Previously Presented)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding zone has a length extending lengthwise of the ski;
continuously, at each lengthwise increment along an entirety of the length of the binding zone, the upper surface of the ski has a width greater than a width of the binding device.

Claim 26. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 25, wherein:

with the binding device fixed to the ski in the binding zone, the lateral support surface is exposed for direct engagement of a lower surface of the boot during skiing.

Claim 27. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

the upper support surface extends to an outer transverse edge of the upper surface of the ski.

Claim 28. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

the upwardly facing recess of the location for receiving the binding device extends within the area corresponding to the metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the wearer's foot.

Claim 29. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

the ski has no boot sole-engaging rib projecting from a longitudinal median plane of the ski.

Claim 30. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the upper support surface extends to an outer transverse edge of the upper surface of the ski.

Claim 31. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the upwardly facing recess of the location for receiving the binding device extends within an area corresponding to a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the wearer's foot.

Claim 32. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the ski has no boot sole-engaging rib projecting from a longitudinal median plane of the ski.

Claim 33. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the binding device further comprises a boot sole-engaging rib rearward of an entirety of the mechanism for binding engagement with the boot.

Claim 34. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 32, wherein:

the binding device further comprises a boot sole-engaging rib rearward of an entirety of the mechanism for binding engagement with the boot.

Claim 35. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the upper support surface extends to an outer transverse edge of the upper surface of the ski.

Claim 36. *(Previously Presented)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the upwardly facing recess of the location for receiving the binding device extends within an area corresponding to a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of the wearer's foot.

Claim 37. *(Previously Presented)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the ski has no boot sole-engaging rib projecting from a longitudinal median plane of the ski.

Claim 38. *(Currently Amended)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the binding device further comprises a boot sole-engaging rib rearward of an entirety of the mechanism for binding engagement with the boot.

Claim 39. *(Currently Amended)* A cross-country ski system according to claim 37, wherein:

the binding device further comprises a boot sole-engaging rib rearward of an entirety of the mechanism for engagement with to engage the boot to bind the boot to the ski.

Claim 40. (*Currently Amended*) A cross-country ski system comprising:

a cross-country ski comprising an upper surface including a longitudinal central zone constructed and arranged to receive a binding device to be connected to a part of the boot in an area corresponding to a metatarsophalangeal bending zone of a wearer's foot for binding the boot to the ski;

the longitudinal central zone of the ski comprising a binding zone for receiving the binding device, said binding zone having a width less than a transverse width of the ski in the longitudinal central zone;

the longitudinal central zone of the ski further comprising at least one upwardly facing boot support surface extending laterally in a direction from said binding zone;

the location for receiving the binding device comprising [[an]] a binding-receiving open interruption in the upper surface of the ski, said open interruption further extending downwardly at least partially to a depth below said upper surface of the ski.

Claim 41. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 40, further comprising:

an upwardly projecting guide rib extending upwardly in the longitudinal central zone structured and arranged to engage with a downwardly facing longitudinal groove of the boot.

Claim 42. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 41, further comprising:

the binding device, said binding device comprising said guide rib.

Claim 43. (*Previously Presented*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 40, wherein:

the ski includes no baseplate on the ski in the longitudinal central zone.

Claim 44. (*New*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 8, wherein:

the upwardly facing binding-receiving open recess is structured and arranged to receive a width of the binding device.

Claim 45. (*New*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 13, wherein:

the upwardly facing open recess is structured and arranged to receive a width of the binding device.

Claim 46. (*New*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 21, wherein:

the upwardly facing binding-receiving open recess is structured and arranged to receive a width of the binding device.

Claim 47. (*New*) A cross-country ski system according to claim 40, wherein:

the upwardly facing binding-receiving open interruption is structured and arranged to receive a width of the binding device.